



June 21, 2010

**Suggestions to the Government Restructuring Task Force
What We Have Learned From Charter Schooling &
Increasing Accountability in New Mexico Public Education**

1. School Performance Contracts

A strong public school reform law includes a specific, legally-binding performance contract. A performance contract allows for maximum site-based flexibility and autonomy in exchange for clear performance standards, oversight protocols and five year outcomes for the school. A school performance contract:

- a. is negotiated between a public charter school and the entity that authorizes them. In New Mexico, charter school authorizers are local school districts and the Public Education Commission;
- b. outlines specific and measurable academic, financial, community involvement and organizational outcomes of the school;
- c. outlines the roles and responsibilities of the authorizer to the public charter school for the 2% administrative fee the authorizer receives;
- d. judges school performance on a variety of measures clearly identified prior to school opening;
- e. accepts some public charter school closures as inevitable;
- f. includes specific ways to keep parents and teachers constantly updated on overall school performance.

2. Smart Charter Caps

Smart charter caps is a deliberate way to grow proven successful schools. It entails both a strategy to assure public school choice and a means to assure the opening and replication of effective school models.

- a. Give clear statutory priority to replicating existing public schools via chartering, which are proven to work.
- b. Give flexibility on charter granting to schools with solid track records.

- c. Aid replication efforts by giving or leveraging support (facility, for example) to replicate schools in under-served communities.
 - d. Target the opening of specific kinds of schools via chartering to underserved communities.
 - e. Include protocols in law protocols for school closures, including parent, teacher and community involvement planning.

3. A “Portfolio” Approach to Public Schooling

A portfolio approach to public schools provides instruction in a variety of ways through many different types of schools founded and operated by many kinds of suppliers (district, charter groups, non-profits). The portfolio approach introduces the idea that school districts act less in a management role and more in an oversight role of school performance. Cities that are currently using the portfolio approach are: Denver, Hartford, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, New Orleans and Houston. A Portfolio Approach:

- a. uses a continuous improvement model based on the imitation and/or replication of successful schools. The most important factor here is that all schools must demonstrate strong performance over time through a variety of measures or risk re-organization;
- b. restructures or closes schools that are not working; and
- c. constantly searches for new ideas and model that work regardless of the type of schools (charter, magnet, traditional, alternative.)